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Hunted Ex-Official Reportedly Did Not Give Secrets to Soviets Before Leaving CIA

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WASHINGTON—Edward L. Howard, the former government employee being sought by the FBI for allegedly giving the Soviet Union national security information, worked for the CIA but did not give secrets to the Soviets until after leaving the agency, intelligence sources said Wednesday.

Those officials, who asked not to be identified by name or agency, said that a former high-ranking Soviet KGB member who defected to the United States in August had provided information that sparked the FBI's manhunt for Howard.

Fallout From Defection

The search, which the FBI officially announced Wednesday, is the first publicly acknowledged sign of fallout from the defection of the KGB member, Vitaly Yurchenko, who came over to the West when on temporary assignment in Rome under a Soviet diplomatic cover.

The FBI, in a federal arrest warrant issued Sept. 23 in Albuquerque, N. M., and made public Wednesday, charged Howard with conspiracy to deliver national defense information to aid a foreign government.

FBI officials would not say how many persons allegedly conspired with Howard or give details about any other suspects.

Adding to the mystery about the ex-CIA employee is that he is also being sought on a probation violation ~~stemming from a conviction in Santa Fe, N. M., for assault with a deadly weapon. He was placed on five years' probation, and now is charged with leaving New Mexico without notifying his probation officer.~~

Apparently No 'Mole'

Howard was employed by the CIA from January, 1981, to June, 1983. The intelligence sources contended that Howard's alleged espionage would have been more damaging if he had served as a Soviet "mole" inside the CIA and had carried out intelligence assignments. However, one official acknowledged that "anybody takes information with them when they leave the (intelligence) agency."

A spokesman for the Senate Intelligence Committee, which was briefed on the Howard case Wednesday, said that the panel had been told last week by the FBI that it was conducting "a covert investigation" of Howard.

The State Department refused to provide the dates that Howard worked for it or the Agency for International Development. However, one source dismissed as incorrect published reports that Howard had worked for the department in Moscow in 1983. He said the individual assigned to Moscow was an Edwin Howard, no relation to Edward.

Edward Howard, 33, resigned Sept. 23 from his job as an economic analyst for the Legislative Finance Committee of the New Mexico Legislature and has not been seen since at his home in a subdivision southeast of Santa Fe.

Neighbors said that FBI agents had visited the Howard residence on Sept. 23 and last Saturday, when they searched the premises.

A search warrant signed by U.S. District Judge Bobby Baldock of Albuquerque permitted agents to look for evidence of a "conspiracy to transmit, deliver and communicate documents and information relating to the national defense to a foreign government."

Philip Baca, director of the legislative finance committee, said that he was questioned by FBI agents about Howard for the first time on Sept. 19. He said that he last saw Howard the next day and that, on the basis of the agents' questions,

he was not surprised by his sudden disappearance.

Curtis Porter, the director of the committee when Howard joined it in July, 1983, recalled that Howard's resume said he had worked for the State Department for about two years in the area of economic forecasting.

Porter said Howard had told him that he had passed the federal examination to be a Foreign Service officer and had been offered a position at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Howard said he turned down the offer because his wife had just had a baby and the couple did not want to rear the child in Moscow, according to Porter.